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SOUTHERN LABOR STORY

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THE SOUTHERN LABOR STORY

UNAGEC

Foreword

Labor has yet to complete the organization of the South and, until this is accomplished, there will not be full economic and political citizenship for hundreds of thousands of workers in the Southland and elsewhere in the nation.

Industrialization has come late to the South and the area is still a major bastion of the open shop and the sweated industry. Sectionalism has remained strong and, despite great changes in recent years, the problem of race relations is yet to be solved.

Many industrialists and Southern political leaders are seeking to exploit these conditions for personal gain. The new industrialization of the South has in part, therefore, gone forward on the basis of an unfair wage competition with the rest of the nation. This has meant lower living standards for millions. A continuation of this situation threatens the welfare of all.

The South cannot catch up with the rest of the nation on this basis. It must establish a base for the future progress of its industry and commerce through adequate mass purchasing power among its people. Until wages and working conditions are brought into line with those of the industrial North, the South itself will be the chief loser.

The Southern worker wants and seeks equality with the rest of America. He wants first class economic and political citizenship, a good home in which to live, and adequate educational opportunity for his children. His struggle to achieve these things is not new and there is now in the South a labor tradition as proud as any in the world.

Organization will not forever be denied the Southern worker, nor will he always be intimidated by the campaigns of fear that have arisen whenever labor has sought to place the union message before him. History has proved conclusively that the Southern worker recognizes his common bonds with the working people of the rest of the nation and that he will join with them in unions of his own choosing.

The Southern labor story, unfortunately, is not well known, nor is its significance generally appreciated. To remedy this

in some small measure, the Industrial Union Department, AFL-CIO, has published this booklet.

In no way does this booklet pretend to be a complete or definitive history of Southern labor. Such a history will some day be written in the language of the people by some discerning scholar. When it appears, it will be a welcome addition to labor's literature.

The Industrial Union Department, AFL-CIO, is indebted to the Trade Union Program on Civil Liberties and Rights for much of the research and materials that went into the writing of this publication. It acknowledges its debt with sincere thanks and gratitude. It is hopeful that this booklet will answer a need that has long been obvious to many of us.

ALBERT WHITEHOUSE, *Director*
INDUSTRIAL UNION DEPARTMENT, AFL-CIO

Study in Contrasts

ON THE surface, life in Bogalusa, Louisiana, isn't much different from that of other Southern industrial towns. Scratch the surface, however, and the difference becomes significant.

Bogalusa is currently one of the best organized cities in the South and an outstanding example of what the union can mean to such a community. Here, workers in the big, modern Crown-Zellerbach paper mill are members of the United Papermakers and Paperworkers and the International Brotherhood of Pulp, Sulphite and Paper Mill Workers, both AFL-CIO unions. A visitor to the community finds the restaurants displaying "Union House" signs. Newspapers, garages, hotels—all are organized.

One of the local hotels is union-owned. The unions boast two halls of their own. In 1950, the Papermakers' local bought an old school building for \$20,000. This building is now the local's headquarters and provides rent-free space to Bogalusa churches, a music school, the Boy Scouts, and fraternal organizations.

Unions are a way of life in the town. Recently, a local merchant summed up organized labor's role in Bogalusa in these terms:

"If you live here for any time at all, you'll soon learn that in community affairs you need organized labor's support for something to be a success. Labor really counts here. I, for one, am glad of it. We get more accomplished and it makes a better town to live in."

As this story of Southern labor will show, the union did not come easily in Bogalusa. Workers in the community persevered against big odds and won their union the hard way. Today's stable labor relations and working conditions are a tribute to the courage of these Southern workers.

Even the anti-union textile mill managements of today's South look almost "civilized" by comparison with the lumber barons who once dominated the life of Bogalusa. Not too long ago, the community was held in the feudal grip of the Great Southern Lumber Company. When the workers tried to form a union, they were met with violent attacks from employers who declared themselves the law. Such tactics didn't work, nor will the present anti-unionism of other employers forever prevent Southern workers from organizing.

Industry has come South to stay, seeking to take advantage of the region and its people. To attract Northern capital, many Southern communities have joined with employers in a shameful competition that has had depressive effects upon whole industries.

Not the least of the concessions pledged to Northern employers has been a virtual guarantee against the organization of their workforces. To make good their pledges, public officials have joined with anti-union employers in creating an atmosphere reminiscent of the open-shop North half a century ago.

Industrialization, however, has brought its lessons to the Southern worker. It has shown that organization gets things done and this lesson has not been lost.

The South will not forever remain chained to the narrow interests of either Northern or native capital. As the "new" South takes permanent shape, the workers of the region will demand all that is properly due them. True, many Southern workers are still fooled or intimidated by campaigns seeking to brand unions as "foreign" to the Dixie scene. Despite anti-union propaganda, Bogalusa and other Southern union towns like it are concrete proof that the union message is getting through.

Over-all success is yet to come in labor's efforts to make available to Southern workers unions of their own choosing. But as industrialization is completed, the examples of union organization will multiply in the South despite "right-to-work" laws, Taft-Hartley, an anti-union press, anti-labor public officials, and employer-organized campaigns to keep out union organization.

Bogalusa today is a harbinger of things to come in much of the South. For the present, however, a more common pattern is represented by Darlington, S. C.

The week before Christmas, 1956, a strange auction took place in Darlington. Some of the most modern cotton mill machinery in the South—\$1,850,000 worth—was on the block, but it was the livelihood of 523 mill workers that was really going under the auctioneer's hammer.

Roger Milliken, chief stockholder of the Darlington Corporation and president of Deering, Milliken & Co.—one of the nation's big textile chains—was out to teach Southern workers who was boss. Milliken, a Northerner, was taking revenge upon workers whose sole transgression was that they had taken advantage of the law of the land to vote themselves a union.

The auctioneer droned on. One bidder offered \$1,600,000 for the complete Darlington Corporation mill. Determined to extract maximum suffering from workers who refused to acknowledge him as supreme, Milliken refused the bid. Instead, piece by piece, the machinery, the buildings, and the lot were sold individually. Even Draper X-2 looms, new and never used, went under the hammer.

Only a few months earlier, Darlington mills had been humming. At that time, Roger Milliken was showing the world that he could make money out of textiles—and out of textile workers.

Externally, Darlington was a model mill. Within the plant walls, the story was far different. The secret of Milliken's success was a nerve-jangling speedup which began in the weave room of the mill.

In the industry as a whole, production had risen from 7.8 linear yards per manhour in 1947 to 11.6 yards per manhour in 1957—a 50 percent increase in a decade. Textile worker wages, however, had gone up only 16 percent in



NEW SOUTH. Bogalusa, La. is representative of a new South where unions are an important part of the social scene. At Bogalusa, the workers at the big Crown-Zellerbach mill are members of the United Papermakers and Paperworkers and the International Brotherhood of Pulp, Sulphite and Paper Mill Workers unions.

this same period. Now Milliken sought to extort extra production from the underpaid millworkers.

In April of 1956, the Southern headquarters of the Textile Workers Union of America began to get inquiries from the hard-pressed men and women of Darlington. On April 23, TWUA assigned veteran organizer Lloyd A. Gossett to meet with the workers of Milliken's mill.

Within two weeks, the union was able to call a mass meeting. More than 200 workers turned out—an amazing showing. Ninety-nine workers signed union membership cards and within six days, a total of 240 were in the union.

Just about one month after Gossett arrived in Darlington, the union petitioned the National Labor Relations Board to hold an election to determine whether or not the workers wanted to be represented by TWUA in dealing with the company. Together with the request for an election, there went 253 signed cards.



LOCAL UNION LEADER. B. B. (Sixty) Rayburn, an active local union leader at Bogalusa, is a member of the Louisiana State Senate.

Pleas, NLRB orders, promises, and the acute suffering of more than 500 workers had no effect on Milliken. In an action that would do credit to a dictator, he closed the mill.

Milliken's action was, without doubt, a setback for the union cause. But as the history of Southern labor has already shown, he will no more teach a permanent "lesson" to the South's workers than equally brutal employers who came before him.

For over a century, Southern workers have been fighting for the union. Despite Darlington and other examples like it, the roots of organization have persevered.

The principle of unionism—an injury to one is an injury to all—has inspired Southern workers to fight for a better life time and time again. Men like Milliken have waged relentless war against labor, but the idea of organization has persisted because unionization inevitably accompanies industrialization wherever men are free.

The story of Southern labor's fight has been omitted from the textbooks. But it is a story of great courage, drama, color, and sweep. Chapters yet to come will chronicle great victories for organized labor. Meanwhile, all labor may be proud of the Southern worker's struggle for union organization and full economic citizenship.

Milliken "threw the book" at the workers. Despite this, some 305 employees had signed union cards by the time the election took place in early September. Much to Milliken's surprise, the majority of workers voted for the union, which soon after was certified as legal bargaining agent.

Milliken then set out to carry out his threats against the workers and their town. On September 12, 1956, the Corporation sent out notices of a stockholders' meeting. At the meeting, Milliken brought down the iron fist: the Darlington mill was to be closed and liquidated. The action was taken over the objections of some small stockholders, for Milliken was able to call the shots since he owned 110,000 of 150,000 shares of the firm's outstanding stock.



ABANDONED MILL. This deserted textile factory at Darlington, S. C., once employed over 500 workers. It was shut down by management to teach Southern workers a lesson.

Tredegar

BEFORE the outbreak of the Civil War in 1861, Richmond, Va., was the smoky Pittsburgh of the South. Its most important mill was the Tredegar Iron Works, a collection of dirty buildings from which came iron, steel, heavy equipment, railroad iron, cannon, and munitions.

The "master" of Tredegar was a precise young West Pointer named Joseph Reid Anderson. In 1842, a year after his arrival, Anderson convinced the directors of the company that they could cut their labor costs substantially if, instead of employing free workers, they "rented" or bought their own slaves. By 1846 there were 600 slaves in the mill and only about 200 free workers—the free workers mainly in the more skilled jobs.

The following spring Tredegar was ready to expand. Its nine puddling furnaces were to be increased to 15. Anderson assigned slaves to the new furnaces and ordered his free workers to instruct the slaves. The workers, sensing that Anderson would fire them as soon as the slaves knew how to handle the puddling and rolling jobs, balked.

The free workers did not object to working beside Negroes since this was then common practice in Richmond, but the fear of losing their jobs stoked angry passions.

Led by a worker named Gatewood Talley, the free workers struck on May 23, 1847. Puddlers, helpers, rollers, and heaters together demanded that Anderson remove the slaves from the puddling furnaces at the new mill and from the squeezer and rolls at the old mill. They also asked for a wage increase.

Anderson's reply was blunt: "Gentlemen, you need not light up the furnaces Monday nor at any time, until you comply with our resolution."

Tension mounted in Richmond as the struggle reached a climax. The Southern press immediately read into the strike a plot to undermine slavery.

With the press and the influential segment of the community heatedly opposing them, the ill-organized workers were easily beaten. Anderson recruited additional slaves and went on to build an industrial giant at Tredegar.

But the tempest at Tredegar symbolized the main issue facing free labor in the South before the great war. The issue, as Southern workers saw it, was not the virtue or lack of virtue of the slave system. It was simply that slave labor was cheaper, worked longer hours, and was more easily "disciplined" than free labor. This competition meant that the free worker had to match the low cost and long hours of the slave in order to hold a job.

As one writer put it: "When a journeyman printer *underworks* the usual rates he is considered an enemy to the balance of the fraternity, and is called a 'rat.' Now the slaveowners have *ratted* us with . . . slaves till forbearance on our part has become criminal."

In Montgomery, Ala., workers held secret meetings to plan resistance to slave competition. In Concord, N. C., a worker was tarred and feathered for suggesting that slaves be kept only on plantations. Elsewhere, workers burned



EARLY STRIKE. Free workers unsuccessfully opposed replacement by slave labor at the Tredegar Iron Works, Richmond, Va., in 1847.



CONVICT LABOR. Free labor at the turn of the century in the South had to compete with convicts. In some instances this practice still continues.

down slave-built construction and left a sign demanding that free workers be given jobs.

So heated did the controversy become that an Alabama lawyer, Robert Tharin, was run out of the state when it was learned that he planned to publish a paper to battle slave competition.

At Tredegar the workers were poorly organized. But the resistance of Southern workers to low pay and long hours was better organized elsewhere.

In fact, in the years leading up to the war, Baltimore, one of the great cities of the period, was one of the most union-conscious. Tailors in Baltimore were striking and winning higher wages for themselves as early as 1795. Baltimore printers had organized in 1803.

By 1836 there were printers' unions in Richmond, Charleston, Washington, Augusta, Mobile, New Orleans, Natchez, Louisville, Nashville, and Cincinnati. Other crafts had organized too.

Pioneer unions existed in Jacksonville and Tallahassee, Fla.; Hopkinsville and Paducah, Ky., and in many other Southern towns. Labor-sponsored newspapers sprang to life in Charleston, S. C., in 1825 and in Baltimore in 1833. By 1840 they were appearing irregularly in Delaware, Virginia, Alabama, Louisiana, and Missouri.

Among the many trades that had formed organizations of various kinds were plasterers, carpenters, timbers, barbers, tailors, seamstresses, seamen, longshoremen, tobacco workers, blacksmiths, and bricklayers.

These workers struck for higher wages, for reduction of hours, and for other improvements. They banded together in political parties. They fought against the use of slave and convict labor as cheap-labor competition.

Southern workers also played a leading part in the national movement for a 10-hour workday. In Baltimore and in Washington, two years before the 10-hour day had become a fighting slogan elsewhere, the workers began a successful campaign for humane working hours.

The Baltimore bricklayers expressed their grievance this way: "A man after toiling 15 hours exposed to the scorching rays of the summer sun, returns to his house worried and dejected" so that he "feels no relish for society or improvement."

Instead, the workers cried, he throws himself down to sleep "till the light of the coming day recalls him to renew his labour."

So successful was the movement for a 10-hour day that by 1840, 10 hours had become the standard workday for federal employees and had become widespread in industry generally, although conditions later worsened again.

Isolated and uncoordinated, union activity continued throughout the North and many parts of the South up to and during the Civil War. But unions were scattered, poorly organized, and weak.

After Appomattox

WARS end sent thousands of veterans home looking for work which wasn't there. The hunger of the armies for equipment, uniforms, and provisions had come to an end. Unemployment worsened from day to day.

Employers, scenting opportunity, began to combine into organizations dedicated to the eradication of unions still remaining. Lockouts, strikes, hunger, and repression marked the years immediately following the war.

Despite widespread activity, unionism had not passed its primitive stage. There was virtually no contact between unions in different cities nor between crafts on a national scale. Unions bloomed during "good times," but disappeared in the general misery of recurrent depressions. Always, new locals had to be organized and old gains recaptured.

This was, in Mark Twain's words, "The Gilded Era." Men who had already made vast fortunes providing munitions or equipment for the warring armies began a wild orgy of speculation. Fortunes grew and tumbled. Political corruption was rampant. The scars of war were still etched deep in North and South as industrialization advanced.

In these erratic ups and downs, labor took a beating. The men who became masters of giant industry already understood the rule of "divide and

conquer." Before the war, slave had been pitted against free worker in the South. Now Jay Gould, railroad magnate, summed up the strategy of employers when he declared: "I can hire one-half the working class to kill the other half."

The misery of depression reached its deepest slough in 1877, triggering a wave of strikes which shook the railroads and the nation from Baltimore and West Virginia to Chicago and St. Louis. The great uprisings of 1877, which saw scores of working people murdered by bayonet-flashing troops, began in Baltimore and climaxed in St. Louis, but touched only the outer borders of the South.

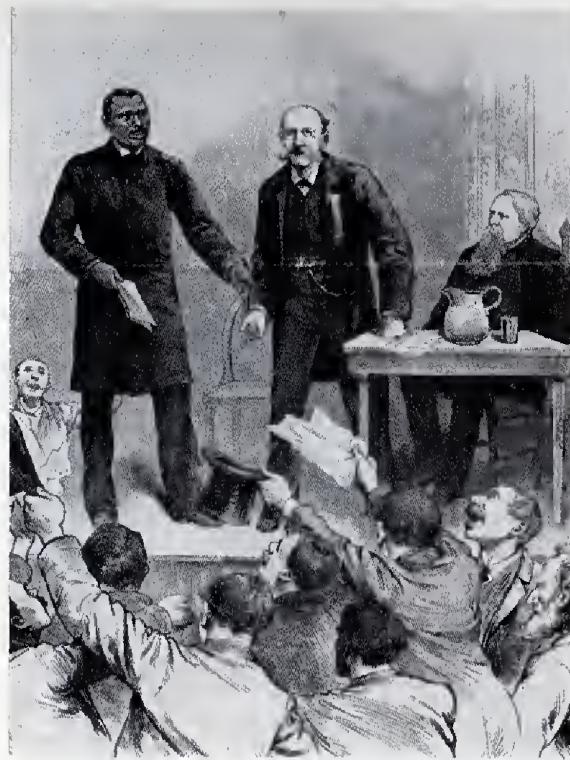
In the South, cotton was king and agriculture was dominant. Yet, here and there, industry was taking root. As the price of cotton declined year by year, the Southern Piedmont region—Alabama, Georgia, and the Carolinas—turned toward the manufacture of cotton goods. New textile



ROBBER BARON. Jay Gould voiced contempt for workers with: "I can hire one-half the working class to kill the other half."



KING COTTON. The South depended upon a plantation economy until well into the 20th Century.



KNIGHTS OF LABOR. Following the Civil War, American workers rallied to the standard of the Knights of Labor. The Knights had more textile locals in the Southern Piedmont than in New England and held their 10th Annual Convention at Richmond, Va. Here Delegate Frank J. Farrell introduces General Master Workman Terence Powderly, leader of the national labor organization.

sell, the more half-starved sharecroppers came banging at the gates for work, and the worse conditions became for the workers.

Companies built shanty towns of squalid huts for their workers. The pay was frequently in "scrip" redeemable only at the commissary owned by the company. Mill owners dominated the political, social, and economic life of the mill communities.

Revolting against these conditions, many workers joined the most important of all labor organizations that had developed to that date. The Knights of Labor was the first really significant labor organization to sink roots nationally. It was also the first that willingly allowed unskilled and semi-skilled workers (like those in textile) to belong. Its doors were open to all workers, regardless of job, race, skill, or sex.

mills dotted the mountainsides of the region. Some were among the largest in the nation.

Between 1870 and 1880, the South increased its cotton spindles by 70 percent and then, between 1880 and 1890, it more than doubled, increasing again by 162 percent. A deliberate and well financed campaign was carried on to "bring the mills to the cotton fields."

The life of the cotton millhand was bitter. Wages ran from 12 to 50 cents a day. Women and children toiled at the looms to supplement the meager wages of the men. The lower the price of cotton in the field

In the mid-eighties, after winning a strike against Jay Gould's Missouri Pacific Railroad, the Knights evoked such enthusiasm among workers that its officers couldn't keep up with the influx of new members. For the first time, a labor organization's membership numbered from 700,000 to one million.

Among these were thousands of Southern workers. The Knights had proportionately more locals in the cotton mills of the Piedmont area than in New England's textile centers.

Southern employers remained hostile. Thomas B. Parry, a high officer of the Knights, after swinging through Virginia, the Carolinas, and Georgia on an organizing trip, reported: "It is as much as a person's life is worth to be known as a member of the Knights of Labor."

Trouble in Tennessee

COTTON had brought mills to the Piedmont region. Coal brought mining in Tennessee.

The workers at Tredegar had rebelled against the unfair competition of the slave. Now, almost half a century later, the slave system was gone. But ingenious mine owners had rediscovered another excellent source of cheap labor—the convict.

"Renting" a convict from the state penitentiary for use as a worker was almost as good as owning or "renting" a slave. For the company it meant a source of cheap and servile labor. For the state it meant revenue.

But for the workers it meant trouble.

People everywhere understood the inhumanity of this system and by 1891 it had been outlawed in many states. In Tennessee, however, the exploitation of convict labor remained a lucrative racket.

In 1883, the Tennessee Coal, Iron and Railroad Company obtained a contract from the state giving it exclusive rights to the use of the state's convicts. This sprawling industrial empire operated mines throughout eastern Tennessee and in Alabama. It paid \$60 a head for the prisoners. Those it couldn't use it subleased to other companies at a profit.

The men who ran the company knew that convicts were useful both as workers and as strikebreakers. They were a club held over the heads of the free workers. Said a company lawyer at the time: "We found that we were right in calculating that free laborers would be loath to enter upon strikes when they saw that the company was amply provided with convict labor."

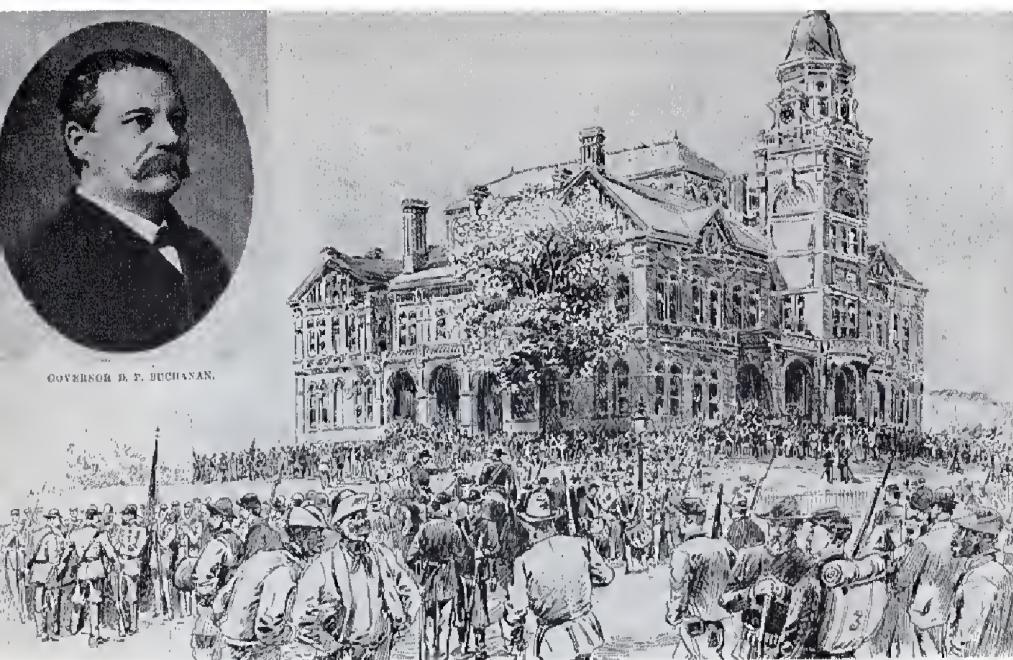
Tennessee unions protested, and the state legislature conducted an investigation into the "hell holes of rage, cruelty, despair, and vice." But the legislature never went beyond its investigation, and convict-leasing continued.

In April, 1891, the storm broke in the tiny mining town of Briceville, near Coal Creek, in Anderson County.

Briceville miners were members of the Knights of Labor. When their



GOVERNOR D. P. BUCHANAN.



CONVICT LABOR REPULSED. Efforts of the Tennessee Coal, Iron and Railroad Company to replace free miners with convicts were defeated despite the use of troops by Governor Buchanan (insert).

contract with the Tennessee Coal and Mining Company expired, the firm refused to renew it. It demanded instead that each worker sign a "yellow dog" contract pledging never to belong to a union.

The workers struck, closing the mine's operations until July.

In the meantime, the company evicted the workers from the company shacks they occupied, and signed an agreement to sublease prisoners from the TCI&R Company.

On July 4, the company announced it would reopen the mine, using convict labor. The next day, 40 closely-guarded prisoners arrived. They were put to work tearing down the miners' shacks and using the lumber to build a stockade to house additional prisoners.

Desperate in the face of this arrogance, the workers—with the full support of the small farmers, merchants, and others in the community—armed themselves with ancient rifles and marched on the prisoners.

The guards promptly threw up their hands and handed over the convicts. The jubilant workers herded their captives—convicts, guards, and company officers—onto the first train to Knoxville. The operation went without a hitch. Not a shot was fired.

Almost immediately, Tennessee's Governor Buchanan shipped the prisoners back—this time guarded by three companies of National Guardsmen.

On July 10, angry miners repeated their previous exploit, and the train to Knoxville again had an embarrassed crowd of unexpected passengers.

Declared the *Louisville Times* in astonishment: "The capture of the Tennessee militia was one of the most amazing things in military tactics!" Once again there was no violence of any kind.

Now, however, Governor Buchanan mobilized no less than 14 companies of troops to escort the convicts back again. The state was in an uproar. Angry miners, workers, and farmers all over Tennessee and neighboring states promised to aid the Briceville coal diggers if they struck again.

On Hallowe'en night the miners marched once more. Faces covered with bandanas, hundreds of miners silently closed in on the prison stockade. Their leaders quietly demanded of the flabbergasted warden that the convicts be turned over to the strikers.

The warden surrendered. Before an hour passed, all 163 prisoners had been given sets of civilian clothing and set free in the night. The stockade was put to the torch and burned to the ground.

The whole operation went off so quietly that the company hardly knew what had happened until afterward.

This time, the company capitulated. It agreed to quit stealing free men's jobs by using convicts. It backed off from its other demands. The men had won a major victory.

But the convict "wars" had just begun in Tennessee. For almost two years the miners fought the use of convicts all over the state. In the end, the military might of the state, dominated by the desires of the big companies, crushed the miners. Hundreds were arrested. Schools and churches were used as prisons. Strikers were sentenced to prison. At least one was shot.

A state of guerrilla warfare raged for months in sections of the state. Plain citizens would hide and feed fugitive miners as troops and deputies sought to hunt them down. Finally, resistance crumbled.

But, in 1896, the Tennessee miners won a major victory. The contract between the Tennessee Coal, Iron and Railroad Company and the state prison board was not renewed. The use of prisoners as "scabs" died out.



"PEACE AND ORDER." Soldiers were often called to intimidate strikers as government threw its weight behind management in early labor disputes.

Victory in New Orleans

BY NOVEMBER, 1892, the American Federation of Labor, which gradually supplanted the Knights as the major national labor organization, had 95 locals in New Orleans. A "Workingman's Amalgamated Council" united the unions of the various crafts.

In late October, the members of the Teamsters, the Packers, and Seafarers' unions walked off their jobs. The Board of Trade had refused to accept the 10-hour workday. It refused to grant other improvements that the workers wanted.

Shortly after the strike began, the Board offered to settle with the Seafarers and the Packers, but not the Teamsters. The Teamster union was largely comprised of Negro members, and the employer's action was a move to pit white and Negro workers against one another.

Despite vicious anti-union editorials in the city's press, the unions stuck to their guns and—more importantly—stuck by one another.

As the controversy grew hotter, workers in other unions became restive. On November 8, 49 other union locals, representing a wide variety of crafts, struck in sympathy with the three unions. Each local presented its own list of long-festering grievances. What had begun as a routine effort by management to sidestep an attempt by workers to better themselves suddenly had turned into one of the first general strikes in America.

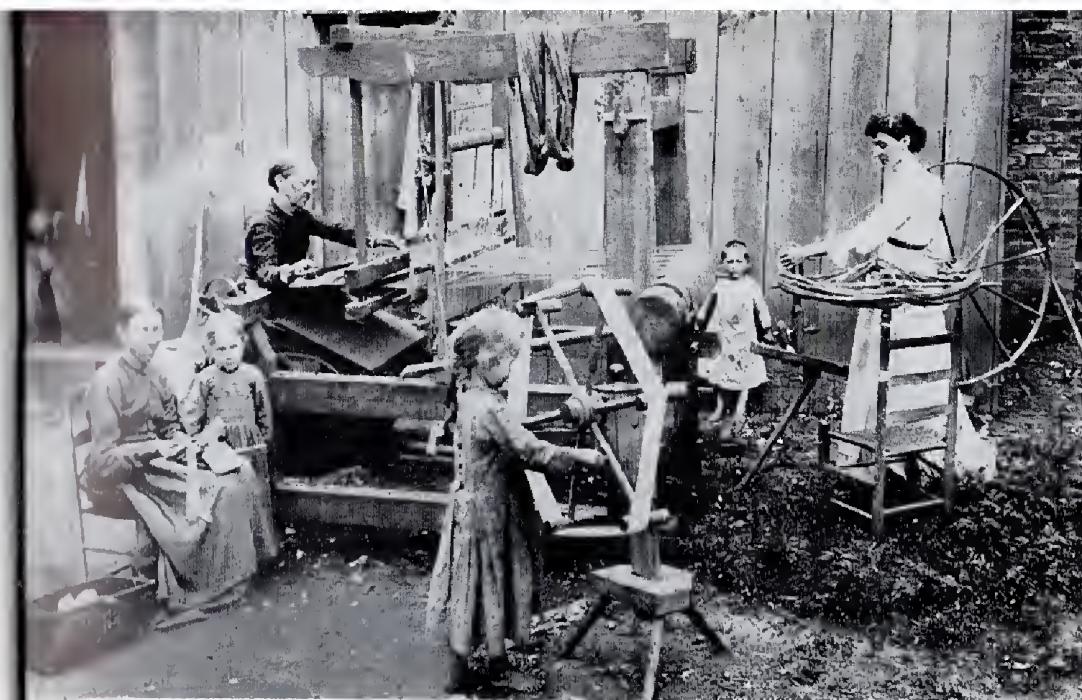
Twenty thousand workers, regardless of race, skill, or other distinctions, joined in a united movement for economic improvement that quietly shut down all business in New Orleans. No one was hurt. There was no strike violence or damage to property. The workers just stayed home.

The workers and their families together made up nearly half the city's population. At their head was a five-man strike committee, one of whose members was an assistant organizer for the AFL—James E. Porter, a Negro. The employers grew furious. They threatened violence, recruited scabs, issued inflammatory race propaganda. But the workers stuck solidly together.

Four days later the Board of Trade caved in. The most important requests of the strikers were met. Southern labor had won a historic victory.

Unfortunately, what the Board of Trade failed to do in New Orleans during the general strike, management was able to do two years later. In October, 1894, English shippers tried to replace white longshoremen with lower-paid Negroes on the New Orleans docks. Violence erupted which cost several lives and \$750,000 in damage to the wharves.

Once again, workers were pitted against one another, to the detriment of all. One newspaper described the textile workers' district in Atlanta as a place where "famine and pestilence are today making worse ravages than among the serfs of Russia."



PRIMITIVE TEXTILE MILL. Children helped weave cotton cloth in home-factories in the South at the turn of the century.

Taking advantage of severe unemployment, particularly among Negroes, employers calculatedly began using Negroes as a wedge with which to split the labor movement.

From 1875 until the outbreak of the first World War, almost the only Negroes admitted into Northern steel mills were those who agreed to scab on striking white steelworkers. In 1875, Negro puddlers from Richmond were imported into Pittsburgh to help break a strike. Other mills adopted similar practices of pitting race against race.

The divide-and-conquer strategy did not stop at pitting white against Negro. Employers used whatever source of cheap labor was available to beat down resistance by organized labor and to keep wages low. In Virginia, a company imported 400 hungry Italian workers to break a strike of coal miners.

Wherever employers succeeded in playing off one group of workers against another, both groups ultimately suffered through lower wages, longer hours, and generally worsened conditions.

The effort to set white and Negro workers against each other became a principal weapon in the employer arsenal in the South and sometimes in the North. Wherever a major organizing drive developed, wherever a strike broke out, companies were likely to try to create antagonisms in the labor force.

The Graybow Incident

ON JULY 19, 1911, a secret meeting was held in New Orleans by the top brass of the lumber industry to "plan war" on their workers. One year later the plan came to fruition in the rattle of rifle fire at Graybow, La.

As civilization marched westward from the East Coast, virgin forests rang with the sound of axes. By the end of the Civil War, forest land was being grabbed up by speculators who bribed, fought, and stole to capture the natural resources of a naive nation. Land that would later yield 6,000 to 12,000 board feet of lumber per acre was picked up for 25 cents an acre!

By 1880, the Northern forests east of the Mississippi had been so recklessly cut over that the lumbermen moved South. Spurred by the invention of the band saw, production boomed. In 1909, the South turned out 16 billion board feet of lumber—a record never since repeated.

Life for the loggers, despite the gaudy tales of adventure writers, was one of risky, badly-paid and sweaty toil. Wages averaged 11 to 17 cents an hour and accidents were frequent.

Lumber workers began early to form unions for self-protection. Lumber strikes were recorded as early as 1890 in Alabama, but it wasn't until 1910 that a major effort was made by the workers. Then, in Alexandria, La., the Brotherhood of Timber Workers was formed. It quickly picked up 35,000 members in Texas, Arkansas, and Louisiana.

It was to meet this challenge that the lumber operators converged on New Orleans for their secret conference. First they gave the Southern Lumber Operators Association dictatorial powers to shut down any of its 300 affiliated mills.

Next, 11 mills around DeRidder, La., and at other locations were shut down and 3,000 workers locked out. Union members were fired and blacklisted as soon as their names became known. The companies hired dozens of professional labor spies and armed guards.

The Brotherhood struck back by drafting a series of demands. It demanded a minimum wage of \$2 for a 10-hour day. It wanted pay in currency rather than scrip; freedom for its members to trade at independent stores as well as at company commissaries; it wanted guards disarmed; and it demanded the right to hold meetings without reprisals.

The operators curtly refused.

Events dragged on inconclusively until, on July 7, 1912, the union called a meeting of workers at the Galloway Lumber Company in Graybow, La. No sooner had A. L. Emerson, leader of the Brotherhood, begun to speak than gunfire rang out.

When the smoke cleared, two union men and one company man lay dead.



FIGHTING BACK. Southern union members are forced to strike after organizing their union. Typical of efforts by AFL unions in the South was this picket line of the Pulp, Sulphite and Paper Mill Workers.

Immediately, 58 union members and sympathizers were arrested on a "conspiracy" charge. A month-long trial ensued. In the end, all were acquitted. Nevertheless, the shooting brought blistering criticism down on the heads of the union. The pro-company press used the episode as an excuse to smear unions, and, after Graybow, one after another, union efforts to better the lot of its members in the lumber camps were defeated.

In 1919, after World War I, a new attempt was made to establish a lasting organization among Southern lumber workers. The International Timber Workers Union and the Carpenters Brotherhood tackled the world's biggest sawmill, which was located at Bogalusa, La., and belonged to the Great Southern Lumber Company. Once again the union was defeated.

Here, the company so thoroughly dominated the town that its general manager was mayor. The leader of the organizing drive, Lum Williams, and three other union men, were murdered by deputized gun-thugs after Williams refused to accept a bribe of \$10,000 in return for quitting the union. A fifth union leader, Sol Dacus, a Negro, was forced to flee into the swamps to save his life.

The violence quashed further attempts at organizing among Southern



BIRMINGHAM STEEL WORKERS GO OUT. Unlike the disastrous strike of 1919, when they stayed on their jobs, these Southern workers joined the CIO Steelworkers picket lines in the organizing wave of the thirties.

lumber workers and it was not until recent years that the union came to Bogalusa.

That same year, however, Southern tobacco workers in Winston-Salem won an important victory. Working together, workers of both races built six large locals representing employees of the R. J. Reynolds Tobacco Company, Brown and Williamson, Bailey Brothers, and Taylor Brothers.

The result of this unity was an agreement signed on August 4, 1919, which granted the tobacco workers a 48-hour workweek, a two percent pay hike, and time-and-a-half for overtime.

Elsewhere, 1919 saw the nation's first massive strike in the steel industry. Three hundred and seventy thousand workers in the mills struck all over the nation, but couldn't beat the company that had become one of the biggest and toughest industrial combines of all time: The United States Steel Corporation.

In the South, Birmingham had replaced Richmond as the steel-making center. Birmingham steelworkers joined in the organizing drive that led up to the disastrous strike, but did not participate deeply in the strike itself.

Revolt in Textile

JUST after World War I, the AFL textile union came to life below the Mason-Dixon line. It moved into a few mills with little opposition and won a number of victories for the workers.

Then in 1919, it lost a strike in Columbus, Ga., where the company turned a wage cut down the workers' throats. From then until the depression of 1921, Southern unionists in the textile mills lost one battle after another. By 1922, the union had been virtually wiped out in the South.

Textiles had grown into the South's most important industry and the number of Southern textile workers kept pace with the industry's growth. Until 1921, wages tended to rise and the differential between Southern and Northern wages had narrowed.

The employer answer to the economic slump of the early twenties was a campaign of wage cutting and stretch-out. Workers were told to learn new skills and tend new machines for smaller wages than they had previously received.

But the textile worker of the twenties was quite different from his grandparents. Many young people from the Piedmont had gone off to work in the factories of Detroit, Flint, Akron, and Dearborn, where wages were substantially higher. The radio and the press gradually were bringing the outside world to the mountain slopes of the Carolinas, Georgia, and Virginia. The result of these and other influences was a gnawing restlessness and discontent.

Textile management never understood this. To them, their "linheads" were docile, child-like pushovers who could be exploited without fear.

The first indication that the bosses were wrong came on March 12, 1929, at Elizabethton, Tenn. There, 500 girls in the inspection department of the American Glanzstoff Corporation walked out in protest against wages that came to only between \$9 and \$11 a week.

By the next day, 3,000 Glanzstoff workers were on strike, despite the lack of a union. The discontent had boiled over.

The women promptly called upon the United Textile Workers of America for help. One organizer arrived on the scene. More girls in another plant owned by the company joined the strike. On March 22, the company backed down. It promised to up wages, to rehire the strikers, and to meet with their newly established grievance committee.

The girls agreed to return to work.

Instead of fulfilling its promise, the company began a reign of terror, refusing to rehire the strike leaders. The AFL sent an official to investigate and he and the organizer were both kidnapped by masked men who carried them across the state line and threatened them with death.

The company fired grievance committee members and called for troops to guard its mill, just in case.



TEXTILE MARTYRS. The funeral of unionists shot by deputy sheriffs at Marion, N. C., pointed up the bitter struggle to organize Southern textile workers in 1929.



Union, a frankly Communist organization. The Communists had sensed the discontent and had found the workers at Gastonia bored with Marxist theory but in dead earnest about a union, winning decent wages, a 40-hour week, and abolishing the stretchout.

Loray workers lived in a squalid mill village over which the mill owners exercised dictatorial rule. Working conditions in the mill were intolerable. Child labor was the rule and the children worked 11 hours a day, six days a week, to earn wages of \$4.95 a week.

The Gastonia strike erupted into violence on April 18. About 100 masked vigilantes appeared on the scene and wrecked the union's headquarters. National Guardsmen, who had appeared on the scene almost as the strike began, stood by without intervening.

The strikers had been evicted from their company shacks as the strike got under way and were camped in a nearby tent village. Despite the attempt to intimidate them, they maintained their picket lines and kept the mill closed down. The Communists, seeking to turn the situation to Party advantage, publicized the case far and wide.

With the strikers holding firm, the local chief of police and four other local policemen tried to invade the tent camp on June 7. The strikers demanded that the police produce a warrant and it turned out that the police hadn't bothered with such "formalities." A struggle ensued and shots rang out. The police chief was fatally wounded.

A dramatic trial of strikers followed but ended in a mistrial. Immediately

Picketing was prohibited. Eight hundred militiamen, deputies, and police ringed the plant. Despite this, the girls picketed, and kept the mills closed.

Finally, on May 25, a woman sent in by the U. S. Department of Labor arranged a settlement. In it, the workers would be rehired only at the pleasure of the company. The firm, however, agreed to meet with grievance committees. At first the girls refused, but were finally forced by circumstances to accept the settlement.

Meanwhile, on April 1, a strange strike had erupted at the Loray mill in Gastonia, N. C. There, the workers had been secretly organized into the National Textile Worker

afterward, a mob kidnapped, flogged, and threatened a number of strikers. In September, a truck carrying union members to a meeting was ambushed. In the ensuing gunfire, a striker was killed. No effort was made to apprehend the killer.

The Gastonia strike ended in a welter of reprisals against the workers. Although strikers were prosecuted, no one was ever prosecuted for committing violence against a worker.

Meanwhile, the United Textile Workers had succeeded in organizing a local at Marion, N. C. Against the advice of the top union officials the workers here, too, struck for better pay and a reduction of the 12-hour workday.

The press, which had blasted the Communist-led strike at Gastonia, insisted that the United Textile Workers would not have the same troubles because it was obviously not Communist. But when the workers at Marion struck, the company president, B. M. Hart, snarled: "I cannot see that there is any difference between this so-called conservative union and the Communist union at Gastonia."

When 250 unarmed UTWA members crowded around the factory gates on September 11, they were met by a sheriff and armed deputies. The strikers refused to give ground and the sheriff shot a tear gas bomb into their ranks. In reprisal, a striker attacked the sheriff with a cane, only to be met with rifle fire from a deputy. Other deputies then attacked the strikers with rifle fire. When the smoke had cleared, six strikers had been killed and 18 others had been wounded.

The employer attitude was summed up all too graphically by the plant manager: "I think the officers are damned good marksmen. If I ever organize an army they can have jobs with me. . . . A good average, I call it."

Strike followed strike in the Southern mills. Some were spontaneous. Others, as at Greensboro and later at Danville, Virginia, were organized by the workers and their union. Defeat marked these struggles in almost every instance.

Yet the fighting spirit of the "docile" textile workers did not diminish. Between 1933 and 1935, a great strike wave swept the nation. Hundreds of thousands of workers all over the country flocked to join existing unions, formed new ones, battled police, militia, and goons. Even agricultural workers and sharecroppers in the South were touched by the union fever.

Between 1933 and the summer of 1934, thousands of textile workers swarmed into the United Textile Workers of America, determined to seek justice and a better life.

The Roosevelt Administration established a code to govern conditions in textile mills but the mill owners ignored it. In August, the UTWA voted a nationwide strike. The union demanded a 30-hour week, \$12 and \$13 a



IDLING WORKERS. This was a typical scene in a Southern textile town as workers found themselves with unaccustomed leisure during the big textile strike of 1934.

week in minimum wages, an end to the "stretchout" and reinstatement of all workers fired for union activity.

The response was immediate and overwhelming. By September 6, at least 365,000 textile workers had poured into the streets. Sixty thousand were out in Georgia; a like number in South Carolina; 88,000 in North Carolina; 38,000 in Alabama; 25,000 in Tennessee. Observers reported that the workers' spirit reached almost religious fervor.

To counter this protest movement, troops, deputized hoodlums, lynching mobs, and police stormed into the streets. It has been estimated that 11,000 national guardsmen and 33,000 armed vigilantes and local police were mobilized against the strikers. In Georgia, Governor Eugene Talmadge established a concentration camp and rounded up hundreds of strikers who were put behind barbed wire.

Once again employer resistance was too great, despite the forward surge of the Southern textile workers. Backed by the strength of the state and local police machines, the companies proved impregnable. The union was small, weak, and poorly financed—unable to combat the might arrayed against it despite the great number of workers who had responded to its call.

When President Roosevelt called upon the workers to return to their jobs in September of 1934, the greatest strike in Southern labor history ended. The results were tragic. Troops kept 80,000 mill hands in Georgia and the

Carolinas from their jobs and similar mass reprisals took place elsewhere in the South. While most workers ultimately regained their jobs, at least 10,000 active union members were fired.

By August of 1935, the UTWA's membership had dropped from 300,000 to about 70,000. The strike wrote the end of a major chapter in Southern labor history.

The Next Upsurge

ON NOVEMBER 14, 1929, a special meeting of union leaders was held in Washington to plan a major assault on the unorganized South. The meeting grew out of the early textile strikes and came at the prodding of the United Textile Workers. For the textile union, Southern organization was a necessity. As long as the Southern workers could be underpaid and overworked, the Northern textile workers' conditions were in peril.

The bosses were using the cheap labor of the Southern worker as a club against the Northern worker. This was not true only of the textile industry. It was true in every industry and craft.

The American Federation of Labor brought together representatives of many different unions at the November meeting. All pledged a special drive in the South.

One year later, the AFL organizers were able to report that 112 new Southern locals had been started, 81 of them in industries other than textile, mostly in the crafts.

But the arena in which the history of the South would be determined was in the new industries that were employing masses of Southerners at unskilled or semiskilled jobs. And in these industries, the Southern drive failed to make as much headway as had been hoped. There were too few organizers and too little money to support Southern workers during strikes.

By the time the 1934 textile strike twitched to an end, there was little Southern organizing activity left.

But a new climate now existed in the nation. In Washington, the Administration looked with favor upon unions. The National Industrial Recovery Act, a temporary measure, passed in June, 1933, had included a specific provision that held that workers had the "right to organize and bargain collectively through representatives of their own choosing. . . ."

This was, in effect, an announcement that the federal government would protect the rights of workers who sought to form unions.

When the NIRA was declared unconstitutional in 1935, its labor provisions were not criticized by the Supreme Court. The Wagner Act, passed in 1935,



CHANGE FOR THE BETTER. Snapping back from the early setbacks, textile organizing accelerated in the late thirties. Meetings like this union gathering in Greensboro, Ga., were part of the upsurge.

made the protections of the NIRA a matter of permanent law. To put teeth into the Wagner Act a National Labor Relations Board was created.

The Senate Labor Committee, headed by Senator Robert M. LaFollette, investigated the union-busting tactics of the nation's industrial managers. Hearings made headlines with revelations of the use of union spies, professional strikebreakers and arms against workers seeking to organize. The Committee showed clearly that traditional civil liberties of workers and union organizers were violated with impunity by police forces subservient to management, as well as by paid agents of the employers.

The need for total organization within the mass industries had become increasingly apparent. This, and the climate of the day, brought forth the Committee of Industrial Organizations within the American Federation of Labor. It led to the historic split within the AFL and the formation of the Congress of Industrial Organizations as a separate federation of industrial unions.

The CIO was established as an organizing force pooling the resources of unions anxious to take on the task of building unions in the mass industries. Like the Knights of Labor, the new CIO organized all within a given plant regardless of skill, sex, or race. By 1937, the CIO had established militant industrial unions in key industry and boasted a membership of 3.7 million. Steel, auto, rubber, packing, and other key industries capitulated in the face of successful CIO drives.

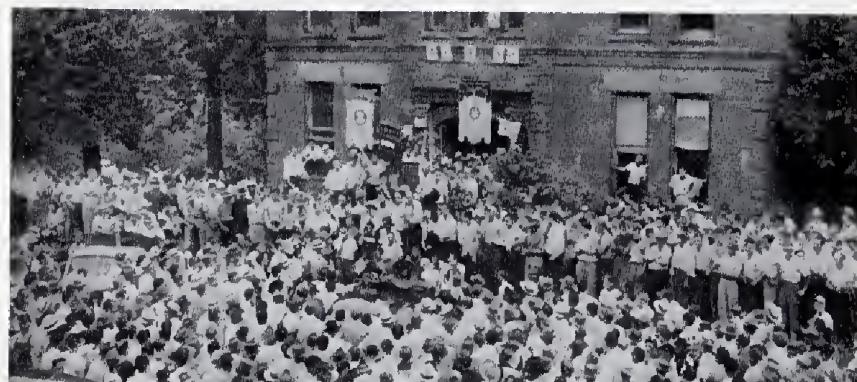
A Textile Workers Organizing Committee (TWOC) took on the job of organizing Southern textile workers who were now thoroughly afraid to join unions. Ku Klux Klan night riders appeared again in Georgia and South Carolina, threatening violence against union sympathizers. Bosses hammered

away at the theme that unions had betrayed workers in the past. Anti-Negro propaganda was resurrected to try to incite textile workers against the CIO policy of membership for all.

The TWOC went to work with imagination and skill. Two powerful northern-based unions threw their weight behind it. The members of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America taxed themselves \$5 each, contributing \$400,000 to TWOC. The International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union, whose members also handled textiles, gave \$200,000 from its treasury.

TWOC sent organizers into the field, organized regional offices, staffed them largely with Southerners, admitted new members without requiring dues, and began to build locals in the South.

Within a month, TWOC started organizing textile workers in large numbers. Soon it was able to force mill owners to sign contracts granting wage increases, hour reductions, and job rights to the workers—an almost unprecedented accomplishment.



ORGANIZING. This organizing meeting was typical of hundreds held throughout the South in the upsurge of the thirties.

By April 14, 1937, TWOC had won contract protection for 50,000 textile workers. By October, it had 450,000 members, with 270,000 workers employed by 905 firms covered by written contracts.

Meanwhile, CIO organizers were cracking other industries as well. Transportation workers in Norfolk, aluminum workers in Tennessee, auto workers in Atlanta, rubber workers in Gadsden, Ala., metal miners in Oklahoma, oil field workers, sharecroppers, seamen, and shoe workers also were forming unions.

The first major breakthrough in a century had brought a new kind of unionism to the South.

War and Aftermath

BY 1939, the organized labor movement had more than doubled in size.

This was accomplished despite the greatest depression in the nation's history. Bad everywhere, unemployment was at its worst in the South. Between 1930 and 1940, no fewer than 9,000 Southern factories closed their doors.

As the new decade dawned, depression gave way to international war. Hitler, emboldened by success and the retreat of the European democracies, marched across Europe, finally precipitating the holocaust with his attack on Poland.

As America faced the Hitler threat, demands for military equipment injected life and vigor into the Southern economy. Shipyards, aircraft, and defense plants went into operation in record time, increasing by leaps and bounds the number of Southern industrial workers. From the outbreak of World War II to 1943, the number of Southern workers employed in shipbuilding and in aircraft plants alone rose from 20,000 to 500,000.

With the war, American labor pledged all-out support. It declared that there would be no strikes for the duration despite rising prices that cut wickedly into the living standards of working people. This pledge was honored, and during the three and one-half years from Pearl Harbor to June 1946, only one percent of one percent (.01%) of scheduled workhours were lost through strikes—an amazing, all-time record low.

When the war ended, labor, recalling the painful experiences of workers after World War I, urged the government to plan ahead for full employment and prosperity. With peace came new tensions and problems.

Working people had been hard hit by profiteering prices. Rents had spiraled. Housing had become hard to get. Thousands of discharged GI's returned looking for jobs, just as the decline of wartime demand closed down factories.

Unions, which had restrained themselves during the war years, now pressed forward to win gains for their members comparable to the profits reaped by industry during the war.

Management, at the same time, rallied for a new concerted onslaught on organized labor. Afraid that the new spirit of unionism that had caught hold of America would bring "too much" industrial democracy, employers undertook to knock the props out from under labor.

In this anxious atmosphere, the CIO announced plans to go ahead with a major organizing drive in the South.

The announcement brought immediate propaganda fire from the reactionary press which charged that the CIO was planning an "invasion" of



POSTWAR PROBLEMS. Strikes and picket lines in the South marked labor's stand for fair treatment in the change to a peacetime economy.

However, all was not violence and hate-mongering. Where management acted in a responsible fashion, the results of organization were often mutually beneficial. In Natchez, Miss., for example, the CIO claimed a membership of 2,000 out of a population of 16,000, mostly woodworkers and steelworkers.

Here is what Charles Reed, executive secretary of the Natchez Association of Commerce, said about the growth of unions in his city: "I believe we have as good industrial-labor relations as there are anywhere in the nation. To my knowledge, there has not been a labor stoppage here in two years."

Despite much enthusiasm, "Operation Dixie" soon faced major difficulties. Employers engaged in all kinds of libel against the drive and the Southern press was quick to back up employer propaganda. Organizers soon were looked upon as outsiders by the communities to which they came, and community resistance was effectively mobilized against them.

Many thousands of workers were organized despite increasing opposition

the South. This was denied and the CIO pointed out that its goals were the economic betterment of the Southern worker.

By July, 1946, more than 200 organizers had been put into the field. Initiation fees were lowered to a flat \$1.00—free for veterans. Soon the CIO began to win victories in places like Galesboro, N. C., Birmingham, Memphis, and elsewhere. Soon, too, came opposition.

Scurrilous poison sheets like *Militant Truth* and *The Trumpet* were distributed by companies where organization was in progress. These papers tried to smear unions as "alien." Management frequently echoed this lie, calling the organizers "outsiders," although the majority of the CIO organizers ultimately involved in "Operation Dixie" were Southerners, and most of them were war veterans.

By the winter of 1946, the opposition had grown violent. The *CIO News* reported that 19 organizers and union leaders had been assaulted in the first four months of the drive. Several had been threatened with death. Two had been ambushed and shot at, their cars set afire.



UNION MEETING. The seriousness of the postwar problems affecting the union movement in the South is shown by the keen attention these workers display at a typical local union meeting.

and employer activity designed to inculcate fear among the unorganized. Many locals that started with great promise proved to be short-lived. "Operation Dixie"—despite the hopes expressed as it started—never lived up to its promise.

Contributing to the difficulties of organizing the South was the rivalry of the AFL and the CIO, and unions within each organization. Inter-union raiding increased and resources and manpower were expended upon this and upon attempts of two or more unions to organize the same groups of workers.

In textiles—the South's largest industry—management adopted a defense in depth that undercut the union's effectiveness. It became a pattern for anti-union mill owners to begin paying their workers union wages at the first appearance of an organizer. Workers were thus more easily persuaded not to join a union. Moreover, the textile bosses defied the will of their employees and ignored their rights. Even where the workers voted a union into existence, the mill owners would often flatly refuse to negotiate.

The job of organizing the South had never before been attempted on so broad a scale and no one, not even the men assigned to do it, had had much experience at the task. Frequently, racist propaganda was used to divide workers into anxious and antagonistic groups. Employers sought to pit one race against another by telling white workers that the union would displace them with Negro workers—then telling Negro workers the opposite.

But all of these reasons for the relative lack of progress were overshadowed by another, more powerful, factor—Congress was about to drop a bombshell on the labor movement.

Blockbuster

WHILE Southern unionists fought to win decent wages and living conditions, top management planners were putting together a blockbuster intended to weaken and crush organized labor once and for all.

Corporation lawyers wrote drafts of union-busting legislation for their friends in Congress to introduce. To prepare the public for these restrictive measures, anti-labor propaganda was issued charging that unions were out to "dominate" America. Day after day prominent Congressmen hammered away at labor's alleged "abuses." The right wing of the Republican Party and reactionary Southern Congressmen filled the air with scare stories.

This sound and fury was echoed in the press and, gradually, as the management leaders had foreseen, the social climate in America began to change. Some who had had little contact with unions began to think that maybe unions were "too strong."

At the same time, employers, particularly in the South, calculatedly stiffened their resistance to unions, creating additional tensions in an already overcharged atmosphere. By the summer of 1947, the stage had been set. In August, Congress overrode President Truman's veto, and passed the Taft-Hartley Act.

The effects of this measure began to be felt immediately. The Southern drive stumbled to a virtual halt. Unions everywhere faced a new kind of opposition. But even then the full impact of the Taft-Hartley Act was not immediately apparent.

Typical of the results of the passage of Taft-Hartley was an attack on the workers at the Nashville Corporation in Nashville, Tenn. One day before the Taft-Hartley Act was passed these workers had voted 2-1 in favor of representation by the United Steelworkers of America. The company, taking encouragement from passage of the law, refused to recognize the union.

The workers waited patiently until November, when finally they struck. The strikers soon were the target of an attack by Tennessee State Police who jailed one union representative on a phony charge of "vagrancy" and beat up others. One organizer was savagely mauled by 10 troopers who broke his ribs. Two strikers were blackjacked by police on a dark road. Police intimidated the strikers with drawn tommy guns.

This was the new atmosphere of Taft-Hartley.

A Senate subcommittee, analyzing the effect of Taft-Hartley on the Southern textile industry, painted this picture in 1950:

"In stopping a union organizing campaign, the employer will use some or all of the following methods: surveillance of organizers and union adherents; propaganda through rumors, letters, news stories, advertisements,



FIGHT AGAINST WAGE CUTS.
Taft-Hartley made the task more difficult but did not stop effective union action.

for an unfair labor practice charge against an employer could be processed.

When an organizer petitioned for an election, the boss could always challenge the bargaining unit—especially with Taft-Hartley. It was always easy for the employer to insist that a group of leadmen were supervisors and not eligible for union membership—especially when such a group was the backbone of union organization. Should the union protest, the boss could stall and stall until the election was sure to be lost.

In the South, the employers took full advantage of the free-speech provisions of Taft-Hartley, turning them into license with impunity. Workers were subjected to barrages of anti-union and hate propaganda. Sometimes the boss would indicate that he would close down if the union came in. Often, the employer's captive audience propaganda was tinged with race hatred.

In 1947, while the propaganda barrage for the Taft-Hartley Act was building up to its final climax, six Southern states—Arkansas, Georgia, North Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, and Virginia—adopted "right to work" statutes banning the union shop and further hamstringing union organizers. Florida already had such a law on its books. When the Taft-Hartley Act passed, it was carefully worded so as to open the door for other states to pass

speeches to the employees; denial of free speech and assembly to the union; organizing of the whole community for anti-union activity; labor espionage; discharges of union sympathizers; violence and gun play; injunctions; the closing or moving of the mill; endless litigation before the NLRB and the courts, etc.

"After all these fail, the employer will try to stall in slow succession, first the election, then the certification of the union, and finally the negotiations of the contract. Few organizing campaigns survive this type of onslaught."

Taft-Hartley provided built-in delay in the procedures of the National Labor Relations Board. Even when a union finally was able to get a favorable decision from the NLRB, it was often a case of a successful operation and a dead patient. Months, sometimes years, might go by before an unfair labor practice charge against an employer could be processed.



RIGHT TO PICKET. These girls are being booked by the police after arrests on the picket line. The right of free assembly inherent in the freedom to picket peacefully is still being challenged today.

"right to work" laws. In 1953, Alabama added such a law, followed in 1954 by Mississippi, South Carolina, and Louisiana. Labor in Louisiana was later strong enough to have the statute drastically limited in its application.

Meanwhile, additional hamstringing laws—many since declared unconstitutional—were passed by Southern counties and cities under the pressure of employers. Such "gimmick" laws usually required that union organizers must "register" and pay a fantastic "fee" for each worker organized. Their intent has been to harass and divert, to drain the resources and manpower of unions.

For example, a 1953 statute passed in Alabama vindictively states that "any public employee who joins or participates in a labor union . . . shall forfeit all rights afforded him under the State Merit System, employment rights, reemployment rights, and all other rights, benefits, or privileges which he enjoys as a result of his public employment."

In South Carolina, six counties wrote identical ordinances requiring "a permit in writing . . . before any person shall solicit membership for any organization." (If this absurd denial of constitutional rights were actually applied as written, it would mean that a woman couldn't organize a sewing circle without first getting official permission.)

In Baxley, Georgia, Rose Staub, an organizer of the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union, was actually convicted and sentenced to 30 days in prison for refusing to comply with an ordinance that stated: "Any organization, union or society in Baxley, Ga., that solicits members and requires

payment of a membership fee must take out a local license costing \$2,000 annually and must also pay over to the town \$500 for each member signed up." Similar anti-union ordinances have sprouted in Mississippi, Alabama, Florida, Tennessee, South Carolina, and Virginia. They have forced lengthy and expensive litigation in almost every case. In the Baxley case, a Supreme Court decision was required to protect free speech.

Under the increasing anti-labor barrage, the AFL and the CIO drew closer together. Unity and cooperation among unions became a matter of necessity. On December 5, 1955, the two organizations merged into a single federation, joining millions of Americans in support of a better life for all.

But workers in the South remain largely unorganized. Textile workers have still to organize their industry there. They have been hampered by harsh conditions in the industry itself, as well as by employer resistance.

Today, certain trends point to a resurgence of unionism in the South, this time, perhaps, on a more permanent footing. New industry is coming into the South. While much of it is in fields like food processing and textile, a significant part is in oil, chemical, metal fabrication, missile-making, atomic energy, aircraft manufacture, electrical manufacturing—industries in which there is a record of successful organization.

Where this is true, unions are becoming more accepted. Workers in the plant of a company which has other factories in the North want the same conditions and wages that their counterparts in the North receive and only union organization can provide this equality.



"MODERN" HOUSING. Housing like this still marks much of today's South. These are the homes of two Southern sugar worker families.

Today

AN EXCELLENT demonstration of this truth occurred when the Vickers Company, part of the giant Sperry-Gyroscopic Corp., opened a plant in Jackson, Miss. The headquarters of the Vickers division is in Detroit, and there the Vickers workers are thoroughly organized.

Soon after the Jackson plant opened, the International Union of Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers (IUE) began organizing the workers. It was a quiet campaign, until a day or two before the scheduled election. At that point, the *Jackson Daily News*, running interference for the company, carried a front-page attack on the union, urged the workers to reject it, and printed a huge picture of IUE President Jim Carey dancing with a Negro woman. (The paper did not tell its readers that the woman was African, a delegate sent by her country to attend a meeting of the UN-affiliated International Labor Organization.) Once again the race issue, which had nothing to do with the organization campaign at hand, was injected into the situation by anti-union forces seeking to divide and confuse the workers.

This time, however, the workers ignored the company and press propaganda and voted 141-115 in favor of union protection. Today, they



VICTORY VOTE. Members of IUE Local 792 vote approval of their first union contract with the Vickers Corporation, Jackson, Miss., in 1957.



CITY WORKERS ORGANIZE. Charlotte, N. C., municipal employees obtain charter for Local 941, American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees, model of union progress in the New South.

have their own organization, Local 792, IUE, with 260 staunch members. The result has been definite benefits to the workers in the form of a three-year contract providing for higher wages, seven paid holidays, cost-of-living increases, a good seniority system, paid vacations. The union frankly admits that the standards are still not as high as for Vickers' workers in Detroit, but it emphasizes that this contract is the first step only. From here on every effort will be made to narrow the difference.

At Vickers in Jackson, as this is written, general laborers start at \$1.28 an hour and can rise to \$1.43 an hour. Assembly line workers start at \$1.75 an hour and can go as high as \$1.93. These are not royal wages in our inflation-wracked economy, but they are considerably better than they were before the union

came to Jackson in the summer of 1957. Moreover, the workers have an effective tool which they can use to win further improvements.

Elsewhere, too, Southern workers have proved that they are like workers everywhere else—understanding their own interests and how to protect them. In Morgantown, N. C., for example, 500 chemical workers have built a successful union and the community respect that goes with it. When Local 427 of the International Chemical Workers Union was forced to strike for ten weeks a few years ago, they took the initiative and blunted one after another of the employer's thrusts. Among other things, union members visited the town's merchants, pointing out that any increases won by the union would be money spent locally, but that any wages paid to imported strikebreakers would mean a loss of income to the community.

The city responded by contributing food, soft drinks, cigarettes, and money. Gasoline prices were reduced for strikers. Credit was extended. With this kind of backing, the workers were able to hold out until the Great Lakes Carbon Corp. realized it was cutting off its own nose to spite its face. The union won a new two-year contract, with important gains.

Elsewhere, too, labor has marched forward in the South. At about the time the electrical workers were balloting in Jackson, a spontaneous sit-down strike broke out among unorganized garbage removal workers in Charlotte,



AGREEMENT REACHED. Labor and management sit down together to sign a first contract setting wages, benefits, and other working conditions in a Southern factory.

N. C. These men had never belonged to a union and were without experience or leadership. An unemployed worker in the city, who had once been a union organizer, stepped forward to help them. He not only offered aid and advice, but also contacted the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees in Washington, D. C. This union, and the AFL-CIO, itself, sent help.

Bitter opposition came from a phony group of "ultra-Southerners" which had close ties with the Ku Klux Klan. Despite this, the workers stuck together. Within two months the workers had joined the union and won their fight. Today there is a well-established local of 350 members.

Recently, Charlotte's mayor expressed the city's reaction in a letter to the union. "Your representatives," he wrote, "showed themselves to be gentlemen in every respect and certainly secured the confidence and help of the City Council. . . . You are to be congratulated in the manner you have set about to bring closer relations between City Hall and city employees."

Stories like these can be multiplied many times. Some have a special irony. In Elizabethton, Tenn., for example, where unorganized girl workers struck and were crushed in 1929, there is now a strong local of the United Textile Workers of America. A union contract has brought stability, decent wages, hospitalization, insurance, and other benefits to the new generation of employees.

Similarly, in Cordova, Ala., it took repeated strikes in the early thirties

and then the longest individual strike in textile history (October 25, 1937, to November 26, 1939) before the workers were able to establish a stable, effective union. Now, however, there has not been a local strike in 18 years. Members of the union are prominent in city affairs and the pay and working conditions for the 850 employees in the mill are among the best in Southern textiles.

Even the company frankly states that Cordova is a better city because it has a union. Says Luchie Vickery, general manager for Indian Head Mills: "We've found that union membership encourages responsibility on both sides. After a man's been on a committee and has helped to settle grievances himself, he's less likely to make trouble. And when an overseer has been a union member, he understands the men's point of view and does his job better."

Ministers, businessmen, even the mayor of Cordova, have all publicly testified that the Textile Workers Union of America has helped make Cordova a better place to live.

In Gadsden, Ala., where a rubber workers' organizer was beaten to a pulp many years ago, there is now a well-established and successful local of the United Rubber Workers of America. Elsewhere, the Communications Workers of America have tens of thousands of members throughout the South, as do unions in steel, auto, atomic energy, and other industries.



LOOKING AHEAD. Union organizers discuss plans with workers at a plant gate meeting at a modern Southern factory.

Tomorrow

THE "lesson" that Roger Milliken tried to hammer into his workers by shutting down the mill in Darlington is an old one. Southern employers have traditionally fought against unionization, but no matter how much pressure is applied to workers, the idea of the union stays alive. It has been alive in the South for over a century. It is alive even in Darlington, despite what happened there.

When a Darlington woman, a widow active in the union, was scolded by her foreman, he told her: "If your husband knew you were going to union meetings and talking up the union in the mill, he'd turn over in his grave."

The woman looked squarely back in her boss' eye. She paused. Then she said: "If my husband knew how hard I have to work nowadays in your mill, he'd stand up in his grave for me."

Another Darlington employee was told by her foreman that she'd been a good worker, but that he couldn't recommend her to another textile mill because she'd been pro-union.

"That's the best recommendation I could have," the girl answered proudly, "you keep yours."

This, then, is the spirit that has written labor history in the South. It is a spirit that will write more successful chapters in a future where the Southern worker will end exploitation and substandard conditions through unions of his own choice.



CONTRACT WON.
Prophetic of the future for unionism below the Mason-Dixon line is this celebration marking the end of a strike in the early fifties.

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